DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 285 EA 029 807

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TITLE The 21st Century Site-Level Resource Manager: Strategies for Successful Devolved Leadership.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Decentralization; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Institutional Autonomy; *School Administration; *School Based Management; *School District Autonomy; School Organization; School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS *Bursars; *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study of site-level resource managers in schools. The paper brings together experiences of the United Kingdom and the United States educational systems to explore issues of educational resource management at the school-site level. The paper focuses on the role of the bursar, the term used in the U.K. to describe a senior non-teaching professional. After providing an overview of the new structure of school management that is emerging in the U.K., the study sought to establish the role of the bursar. The paper describes the emergence of bursars, who were appointed following the introduction of "Local Management of Schools" in 1988 when schools became responsible for their own budgets. The paper discusses the current role of the bursar and that person's responsibilities, which include finances, human-resource management, pupil services, and other duties. The paper describes interactions between bursars and stakeholders in the school, which reveal that bursars interact with a wide variety of people in the course of their day. The paper offers an overview of the site-level resource manager of the future and presents a model for determining where and how the administration function should operate. (Contains 24 references.) (RJM)

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The 21st Century Site-level Resource Manager: strategies for successful devolved leadership

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Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Research Association, Montreal, Canada: April 1999

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The 21st Century Site-level Resource Manager: strategies for successful devolved leadership

This paper reports on a study of site-level resource managers in schools. The term used in the U.K. to describe the senior non-teaching professional is 'bursar'. The paper brings together experiences of the U.K. and U.S. educational systems to explore issues of educational resource management at the school/site level. The rise in the U.K. of the decentralised, autonomous, school movement and the consequent appointment of site-level resource managers is analysed. A reconceptualised model is then suggested for school leadership and management in the 21st century and implications are identified for the role of site-level resource manager of the future.

Rationale

Throughout the world, governments and educationalists are debating and promoting devolution of management decision-making to the school level, (Caldwell & Spinks 1988, Hentschke & Davies 1994, King 1991). This restructuring of education to site-based management facilitates a movement away from a bureaucratic and protectionist state system. In response, reforms to the system need to move towards a more autonomous entrepreneurial approach. However, as Maxcy (1995:84) asks: "How evident are decentralization and site-based management in the new restructured organization scheme? How is the organization run, what type of arrangements are found, and who are the leaders?"

In the U.S., administrators are redefining their leadership role as they respond to the increased workload created by greater autonomy and restructuring (Murphy & Seashore Louis 1994). School leaders in the U.K. have also been exploring ways of fulfilling their extra responsibilities under the Education Acts of 1986, 1988 and 1998, which gave schools increasingly more autonomy. The changes also brought about the perception that good schools had to be good businesses. The principal, therefore, increasingly faced the tensions of the dual roles of organisational administrator and leader of teachers in developing and delivering the curriculum (Bowe, Ball & Gold 1992). The solution in many schools has been the appointment of a site-level resource manager to manage the non-curricular administrative role.

In the U.K., as schools became more confident about using the budget in innovative ways, alternative opportunities for supporting the teacher in the classroom were considered (Mortimore *et al* 1995, Bullock & Thomas 1997). This initiative saw the introduction of a range of support staff such as non-teaching assistants and technology technicians. These extra staff also required co-ordination. As the manager of non-teaching support activities, the school bursar was the person most suited to fulfil this role.

Although many of these initiatives have been in place for over 10 years, the field remains significantly under-researched. Key issues in the development of bursarship include:

- the role of school support staff/bursars in providing optimum level educational resources to enhance pupil learning;
- the relationship of the school support staff/bursars to teaching professionals in the school;
- the inclusion of a bursar on the school leadership team.

Context

The rise of site-based management in the U.K. parallels the move to more responsive customer oriented organisations with flatter management structures in the business environment (Davies and Ellison 1997). As education organisations respond to the increasing pace of change (Fullan 1993) and become more like businesses of the future, the structure of their administration will need to reflect this change in orientation (Sawatzki 1997). Such a re-conceptualisation takes into account the difference in emphasis from administration to leadership, developments in thinking about the way we learn (Gardner *et al* 1996) and how this might be mirrored in approaches to successful leadership (White *et al* 1996). The conceptual background is represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Conceptual Background for the Changing Role of the Bursar

Area of Debate	**PRESENT** *Bursar/ Clerk*	**FUTURE** *Site-level Resource Manager*
Job description (Esp 1993)	Functional analysis	Key tasks for future success
Level of performance (Pedler & Boydell 1985)	Technician	Artist
Domain (Gardner *et al* 1996)	Rational	Intuitive
Perspective (Maxcy 1995)	Modernist	Post-modernist
Leadership Style (Bennis 1985)	Manager	Leader
Overall Activity (West-Burnham 1999)	Administration	Leadership

Over the past century industrial and educational organisations tended to develop as hierarchies. They have been characterised by a line management structure where boundaries were difficult to cross horizontally and vertical movement only occurred through promotion. In this structural modernist world, schools were rational entities that operated within clearly defined rules, teachers taught and someone else, usually outside the school at the district or Local Education Authority (LEA) level, was responsible for management and administration. Schools today need to respond to increasing uncertainty characterised by rapid global changes, parental and government pressure and a variety of social problems. To increase school responsiveness reform proposals have included:

- an emphasis on student achievement,
- increased autonomy at school level,
- emphasis on community involvement,
- teacher and staff development programmes accompanied by appraisal,
- results driven accountability (Maxcy, 1995:77).

Additionally, education has been characterised by complexity in the form of:

1. **ambiguity** - autonomy of site based management versus centralised decision making in the form of the National Curriculum where in the U.K. guidelines for literacy and numeracy are particularly prescriptive;
2. **turbulence** - rapid access to information, communication and technological developments that could radically alter the way the curriculum is delivered world-wide;
3. **uncertainty** - in the search for accountability and higher standards, traditional routes to senior leadership have become both more fragmented and less attractive professionally and remuneratively (Lashway, 1998).

The highly structured organisation, which was more effective in a stable industrial age is no longer appropriate for the complex environment of the information age, with its emphasis on accountability; this requires a more flexible, flatter, organisational structure. In such a context professional responsibility and leadership roles are defined by current needs and not historical tradition.

In the post-modernist era, characterised by complexity and constant change, the manager as controller and administrator of the status quo is ill equipped to respond to turbulence, ambiguity and uncertainty. Rather than reacting to change, those who wish to be successful and effective in their chosen field, must lift their eyes to the horizon to anticipate and prepare for the future (Bennis, 1985:7). Effective school leaders, therefore, need to develop an awareness of the immediate and global environment and the ability to respond to the future through scenario planning before creating a vision that can be communicated and supported by their colleagues and staff.

Such leaders need the ability to draw on a wider range of ways of thinking. Rather than the more traditional rational approach focusing on "making the numbers" they would use intuitive insights and interpersonal skills. Leaders in this futures oriented approach will be operating at the level of "artist", as distinct from "technician" (Pedler and Boydell 1985). They will be characterised not by an approach to job tasks which drills them in narrow functional skills and rigid National Standards (the competence model epitomised in the U.K. by National Vocational Qualifications, the Management Charter Initiative and the National Professional Qualification for Headship) but by one based on more generic attributes which distinguishes the "best from the rest" (Hay McBer in Esp 1993, Davies and Ellison 1997).

At first sight it would seem that, if principals are to be encouraged to develop these more strategic approaches (e.g. through the U.K. government's National Programme for Serving Heads), then the routine clerking duties could fall to others in the senior leadership team i.e. the site-level resource manager. However, such a modernist solution could lead to a fragmentation of responsibilities and may not be in the school's best interests. An alternative post-modern solution would be to ensure that, whilst allowing for a degree of division of labour in the senior leadership team, each member carried out some of the generic leadership tasks of the senior team as a whole - this would be more in tune with the flatter management structures of the responsive organisation. This study, therefore, was designed to investigate how leadership teams were responding to increased site level administration, particularly in the nature of tasks and responsibilities of the site-level resource manager. The paper reports the findings of the pilot stage of the research project which explored the changing role of bursars in U.K. schools and develops a model for determining what type of site-level resource manager is needed in schools of the future.

The Site-level Resource Manager

In the U.K. a new structure of school management is emerging. Alongside the headteacher on the teaching side are the deputy headteachers, with curriculum and pastoral responsibilities and parallel to these is the site-level resource manager as leader of the support staff (see Fig.1).

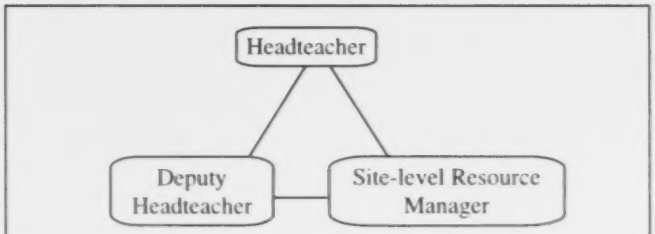

Fig.1 The U.K. School Senior Management Team (SMT)

Where, in the past, strategy was set by top management leaving the operational aspects to middle managers, indications are that future leadership will be distributed throughout the school (Maxcy 1995). Thus, each person in the organisation will be responsible for some strategic as well as operational thinking.

In the U.S. the big decisions about resource management often reside at the School Board level, with site-level decision-making being more of an implementation task. LEAs in the U.K. functioned in a similar fashion with low-level clerking being characteristic of site-level resource management. A site-based management system brings strategic **and** operational decisions with the devolution of educational resources. The challenge for the site-level resource manager of the future is to play a full part in senior leadership **and** lead their teams in a way which respects the contribution all can make to a supportive learning environment. The following section of the paper discusses the pilot project conducted in the U.K. to explore these issues.

Methodology

NB: This section uses the U.K. conventions of headteacher (principal), deputy headteacher (assistant principal/dean), and Governing Body (School-level Board, composed of non-salaried governors who are the legal representatives of the community charged with the responsibility of leading and overseeing the management of the school).

The U.K. literature does not reveal any specific paradigm for research in this area. The research frame for this study, therefore, is holistic in approach including both a quantitative analysis of bursars' job descriptions and backgrounds and a qualitative approach through observation and focus groups. It involved a case study of three groups of bursars on the first MBA programme in the U.K. specifically targeted for this emerging professional group. They formed an opportunity sample who could supply job descriptions and career histories. They were also easily accessible for interviews, observation and focus group discussions and provided comprehensive secondary data through their course-work. As a consequence, we recognise that our findings are indicative rather than representative.

The study first sought to establish the role of the bursar. Job descriptions were analysed and bursars observed in a small sample of schools. Job descriptions were chosen for analysis because they provided an indication of the expectations of headteachers and governors who appointed the bursars although it was acknowledged that job descriptions only present a snapshot of a particular time in a school's history. The job descriptions were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively focusing on bursar's status, work tasks, levels of responsibility and required skills. Observations were used to determine what bursars were doing in practice. Each bursar's day was recorded as a series of timed activities, categorised into types on a spreadsheet, coded and charted. The total number of activities carried out by each bursar was itemised on a minute by minute basis, each activity being an identifiable single event with an observable beginning and ending. The focus groups were then used to explore the role of the bursar in the future. During each session issues pertinent to the bursar's role and current trends in education were discussed before the bursars were asked to identify their key responsibilities and tasks and their contribution to the effective school.

Discussion of Findings

The Emergence of the School Bursar

The review of literature indicated that in U.K. state school bursars were appointed following the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS) in 1988, when schools became responsible for their own budgets; this was even more the case with directly funded Grant Maintained (GM) schools. Senior leaders were spending a large proportion of their time on finance and administration to the detriment of education and the curriculum and this inevitably alienated the teaching staff (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992). School Governing Bodies, also felt that the new responsibilities should not be the remit of teaching staff and appointed people with appropriate specialist knowledge as they saw fit (Thomas & Martin 1996).

Bursars do not as yet have an obvious career route into the profession but are recruited from a variety of backgrounds and have a range of competencies. Our findings suggest that bursars come from commercial, military, administrative, teaching and school secretary backgrounds. In keeping with embryonic professions, there is no shared career starting point that can be used for developing the bursar in post, although skills in finance and administration are a common factor.

Current Role of the Bursar

Bursars experience a wide variety of day to day activities. The terms used to describe their responsibilities and roles include such terms as: administration, finance, premises, leader, manager, officer, bursar, registrar, director or head of department. In common with other managers, for example, principals/headteachers (Murphy & Seashore Louis 1994, Weindling & Earley 1987) and senior education leaders (Thody, 1997) there is no typical day, work being punctuated by interruptions and requests to support others' problem-solving

Responsibilities of the Bursar

An analysis of the job descriptions indicated that the bursar's role covered six common areas of responsibility (Chart 1). A range of activities was listed within each of these areas encompassing both operational and strategic responsibilities:

1. **Finance:** accountancy, budgeting, payroll, insurance, providing advice, income generation, cost management, financial knowledge and policy making.
2. **Human Resource Management (HRM):** clerical and administration, providing absent teacher cover, employee relations and communications, legal knowledge, recruiting, training and managing support staff, health and safety, managing contracts, providing advice, monitoring employment conditions and evaluating and implementing policy.
3. **Premises:** fire, health and safety, contract supervision, development project supervision, security, equipment maintenance, maintaining services, administering records and maximising use of premises.
4. **Pupil Services:** managing, monitoring and reporting on pupil admissions, administering pupil records, managing travel arrangements and managing catering provision.
5. **Marketing:** promoting the school, promoting the school's image, promoting events, developing relationships with the community, developing relationships with parents and customer services.
6. **Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** commitment to, and training staff to use, information technology, developing and using the administration network, applying data protection legislation and liasing with appropriate external agencies.

Chart 1: Bursars' Formal Areas of Responsibility

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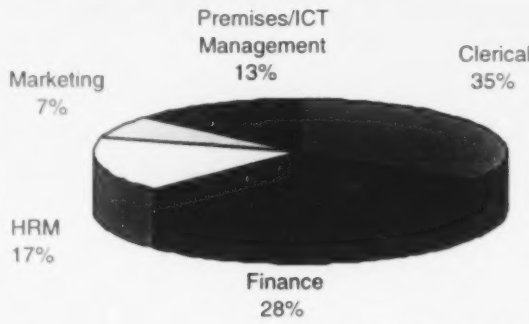
Almost half of bursars' accountabilities were linked to finance, with premises and HRM together being allocated almost the same proportion of responsibility. Pupil services, marketing and ICT featured in some job descriptions, but were minor functions of the role. Additionally over half of the bursars acted as clerk to the governors and a quarter served on governing body committees.

In contrast to the job descriptions, during the observations the largest amount of bursars' time was spent on routine clerical work (e.g. filing, drafting letters and reports), followed by finance and HRM. Premises/estates work came next (though this often included oversight/adjustment of administration ICT); marketing/promotion took up the smallest amount of time (Chart 2). There were a few instances of bursars beginning to work with pupils on aspects of curriculum and learning (particularly test/exam results and visits/trips) but the time spent on this during the observations was so small that it cannot be shown on the chart.

The average number of activities in a day was 115, though this records every change of activity and hides the fact that some activities were returned to a number of times during the day. This fragmentation of the working day into a large number of individual activities is a common characteristic of the working life of senior managers. Although the

observer may perceive this fragmentation as being interruptions to the "real work", in practice many of the activities are "joined up" over the day into a sustained piece of work or are themselves short periods of interaction which "keep the plates spinning" on an ongoing issue.

Chart 2: Nature of Activities from Observations



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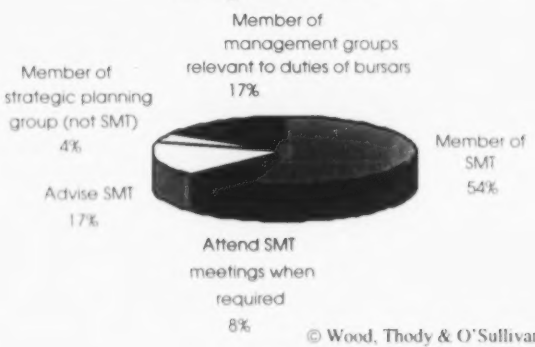
Bursars' Interactions

The job descriptions themselves do not give an understanding of the interactions between bursars and stakeholders in the school, although they did indicate the range of people or agencies with whom they came into contact. They were expected to work with or provide information to teachers, support staff, governors, pupils, parents, the community, government agencies, and businesses. Responsibility levels varied in the job descriptions analysed. Line management charts were included in eight percent of the job descriptions and four percent stated that the bursar held a leadership role. In half of the job descriptions the headteacher was responsible for managing bursars, with bursars themselves managing a range of support staff including administrative and finance staff, secretaries, caretakers, cleaners, technicians and lunch time supervisors.

The bursars' relationship with the senior management team varied. Just over half of the bursars were full members of the team, with the remainder acting as advisors or attending and contributing in specific instances. Fewer than 20% were members of groups other than the senior management team. Most bursars had a close working relationship with governors and almost all were either members of, or clerks to, the governing body or provided advice and assistance when required. The relationship between the bursar and senior management team is illustrated in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Relationship Between the Bursar and Management Team


Member of management groups relevant to duties of bursars 17%
Member of strategic planning group (not SMT) 4%
Member of SMT 54%
Advise SMT 17%
Attend SMT meetings when required 8%

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During the observations it was possible to see that bursars came into contact with a wide variety of people in the course of their day. Even so, they still spent between a quarter and a third of their time working alone. In the remainder of their day they worked most commonly with other support staff, followed by external agencies (though this may have been exaggerated at the time of the observations by audit and end of financial year procedures). Although the time spent with the principal, other senior managers and teachers was small, it tended to be of some significance and often conducted in "verbal shorthand" indicating a high degree of understanding of each other's business. The least commonly encountered persons in the day were governors, community/business, pupils and parents (Chart 4).

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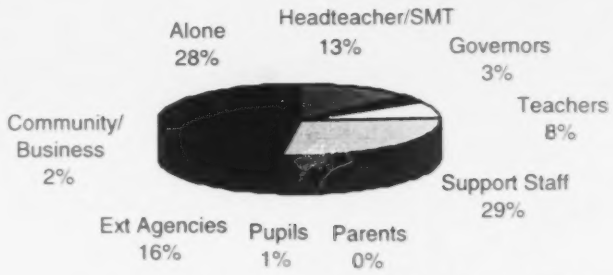
Chart 4: Bursar's Interactions During Observations



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Level of Operation

Underlying this research was the assumption that site-level resource managers of the future will move away from routine administration and clerking as they take a more strategic role in the senior management team. In order to understand the status and operational level of bursars, job descriptions were analysed by verb descriptors to determine the frequency at which bursars were expected to work at administrative, management and leadership levels. Indications were that bursars operated mainly at the management level though they worked at the three levels across all areas of responsibility. Examples of their operational levels included; 'assist with administrative arrangements in connection with the appointment of teaching staff' (administration), 'monitor employment terms' (management) and 'devise and develop effective management policies' (leadership).

The activities in the observation field notes were also coded for their level of operation, i.e. ***administration*** consists of routine work, usually alone, such as organising and filing, ***management*** includes decision making and supervision of others whilst ***leadership*** is characterised by strategic thinking, policy formulation, evaluation and review (West-Burnham, 1999). It is interesting that, although administration and management were by far the largest categories, opportunities for bursars to engage in leadership activities are increasing (Chart 5). The aggregate figure also hides the wide range of time spent on leadership amongst different bursars. In the sample observed this varied from nil to over a quarter of their time.

Chart 5: Bursars' Levels of Operation During Observations

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A clearer picture is beginning to emerge from this study about the role, activities and relationships of bursars in schools. Although this can hide wide variations in the role between schools, lessons can be drawn out for the future. Observations and job descriptions depict working days that cover a variety of activities, which require a wide range of skills and cover many areas. Within these areas, bursars are required to have a legal knowledge of health and safety, personnel issues, education and finance. A working day can last from 8 - 12 hours, usually with little time for lunch. On average, the bursar could find that only 25% of their time is available for work on a specific task. They usually have to snatch this time between the myriad of demands made on them. The rest of the time they are interacting with a range of teaching and associate staff, pupils, parents, governors, business and community representatives, banks, LEA officers and officials such as health & safety inspectors and fire officers. Some are working as full members of the senior management team.

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The Site-Level Resource Manager of the Future

In order to project the current picture in to the future, focus groups of school bursars were held to brainstorm the future role and the attributes that would be needed. At the first meeting, discussions were held on issues related to supporting learning, human resource management, information and communication technology, health and safety and the effective use of buildings. In a card-sort exercise based on an amalgamation of National Bursars Association key areas of bursarship and Surrey LEA's headteachers', curriculum leaders' and teachers' accountabilities, the groups then categorised their responsibilities. They agreed on six general support areas of:

1. Finance
2. Human resource management
3. Premises
4. Marketing and promotion
5. Strategy
6. Administration.

Two of the three groups added teaching and learning/curriculum to their responsibilities. These responsibilities included helping to develop strategies to support the learning of pupils and ensuring that their line-managed staff understood the teaching and learning plan. The responsibilities proposed by the groups as essential to bursars are listed in the table below:

Table 2: Essential Tasks for Bursars of the Future - responses from focus groups

Finance
1. Lead the team responsible for finance which includes budgeting, planning and control
2. Lead the development of sound financial systems

Human Resource Management
1. Develop human resources
2. Manage the performance of the school's support staff through the provision of appropriate procedures for appointment, induction, appraisal and development
3. Manage the deployment of support staff
4. Evaluate the support staff development programme
5. Develop working relationships with support staff
6. Create the opportunity for colleagues to learn from one another
7. Represent the views of colleagues within area of responsibility
8. Know about relevant human resource legislation
9. Manage support contracts

Premises
1. Establish and maintain an attractive and purposeful working environment
2. Ensure conformity with health and safety legislation
3. Establish and monitor a site security policy
4. Manage support contracts

Marketing
1. Articulate the curriculum philosophy of the school
2. Obtain support for school purposes, objectives and policies
3. Create and maintain relationships among all members of the school community
4. Develop supportive relationships with parents
5. Develop relationships with relevant agencies to secure support for the school
6. Develop relationships with community to secure support for the school

Strategy
1. Help develop school purposes, objectives and policies
2. Articulate and implement all school policies
3. Lead and manage a team of colleagues in developing strategies to put agreed policy into practice
4. Assist in the design and implementation of strategies for development and change where required
5. Evaluate strategies with a view to promoting continuous improvement in quality throughout the school
6. Develop and monitor management structures, processes and procedures to ensure that the school achieves its curriculum and pastoral aims through the fulfilment of the development plan
7. Initiate and manage change and improvement in pursuit of organisational goals

Administration
1. Ensure that administrative requirements are fulfilled in order to facilitate the smooth running of the school
2. Oversee systems to monitor and record achievement
3. Carry out record keeping procedures to satisfy school policies and national inspection (Ofsted) requirements
4. Observe colleagues at work to inform future developments

The table illustrates the bursars' future role as contributing to the development of school policy and leading their teams to put this into practice. In particular they would be developing the areas for which they had overall responsibility by monitoring and evaluating current practice and linking it with the school's development plan. They would also provide specialist knowledge and manage contracts. Their relationships with the school's stakeholders were seen as being important in promoting the school's ethos and interests and representing the views of the support staff. In general they would be establishing and maintaining a purposeful working environment. An analysis of the verb descriptors in these responsibility areas indicates a significant shift from administration to leadership activities as shown in Chart 6 .

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Chart 6: Future Levels of Operation from Focus Groups

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Nine months later the same focus groups met again to discuss current issues in leadership development and in particular the current government agenda for education, national standards for management and leadership, factors involved in high performance, successful continued professional development and leading learners. They were asked to discuss and list:

1. the key roles of the site-level resource manager of the future;
2. how the site-level resource manager should relate to non-support staff groups;
3. what the site-level resource manager can do to contribute to building school achievement.

The key roles for the site-level resource manager of the future were envisaged as contributing to the school's vision and participating in strategic development and planning. They considered that they should be change facilitators who interpret the school's vision in practical terms and promote and deliver the school's aims. Although they would concentrate on leading the business side of the school, they felt that they were also key players in the learning environment and in providing a consistent management approach and professionalism in their field.

In relation to non-support staff, the site-level resource manager would be a professional of equal status offering a different perspective. Their expertise in their own area would be used to inform, support and contribute with integrity to the development of the school. They also saw themselves as a link between stakeholders such as governors, teachers and support staff.

The site-level resource manager's contribution to school achievement would be through the creation and continuous improvement of a learning environment and the provision of a financial overview and effective support services. They would lead high performing support staff who would understand the vision of the school and would be welcoming to the community. In order to provide an optimum service to the school, they would need to develop a wider perspective by keeping up to date with education initiatives and agencies external to the school.

A Model for Determining Where and How the Administration Function Should Lie

Looking at the levels of operation of the bursars in the pilot study and the focus groups we can see the three levels of management performance (adapted from Stevens 1991):

1. **Reactive, functional:** competent within the role and doing a satisfactory job.
2. **Active, systems specialist:** Level 1 plus the ability to evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses and how they affect the organisation
3. **Proactive, site-leader:** Levels 1 & 2 plus facilitating their own professional development.

The study so far shows most bursars operate at levels 1 & 2, but the focus groups demonstrated the potential for many bursars to operate at level 3, which is characteristic of the role in the future. Thus three "ideal types" of site-level resource manager can be developed representing these three levels. Level 1 can be characterised as (in U.K. terms) the Administration Manager, not a member of the senior leadership team, carrying out routine clerking and servicing the needs of teaching staff on request. At this level they would not be expected to have a direct contact with teaching and learning as such but may well provide significant information for the educational decision making process. Level 2 would be the Support Services Manager, leader of the support staff, a member of the senior leadership team but still subordinate to senior teaching staff. There may well be friction and tension between the site-level resource manager and senior teachers.

Finally there is the ideal type of the School Business Manager as a full member of the school leadership team. Alongside the principal, assistant principals, and deans s/he is active in strategic development and establishing procedures ensuring they are communicated and realised in the school. Her/his understanding of the education process facilitates the building of flexible, interactive systems and support learning teams. As a leader of 'associate staff' (Mortimore et al 1995), s/he ensures that administration, finance and premises management are efficiently and

effectively carried out by staff who feel valued and able to interact with and support teaching staff. Through an understanding of the their own role, the school's values and the needs of educators to facilitate learning, the school business manager ensures the school is a living and adaptive learning environment, which anticipates and responds to change.

In response to post-modern liberalism, the school leadership team could explore and reaffirm the democratic values of the worth of the individual, the need for freedom and intelligent inquiry and the responsibility of stakeholders to discover communal ways of achieving practical ends (Maxcy, 1995). Schools can be encouraged to forget the habits and attitudes of decades and transform into organisations that work in supportive cross-functional teams, which concentrate on exploring the best resources to facilitate the learning of the pupil. In pursuing such a goal, schools can be conceptualised as being at a point on the continuum between total dependency on the school district and total autonomy. In practice, as schools in the state sector depend on public funds and thus have some accountability to their resource providers, they are not able to take up the extreme positions on this continuum.

The continuum can therefore be set up on a sliding scale between the level of dependency and the level of autonomy:

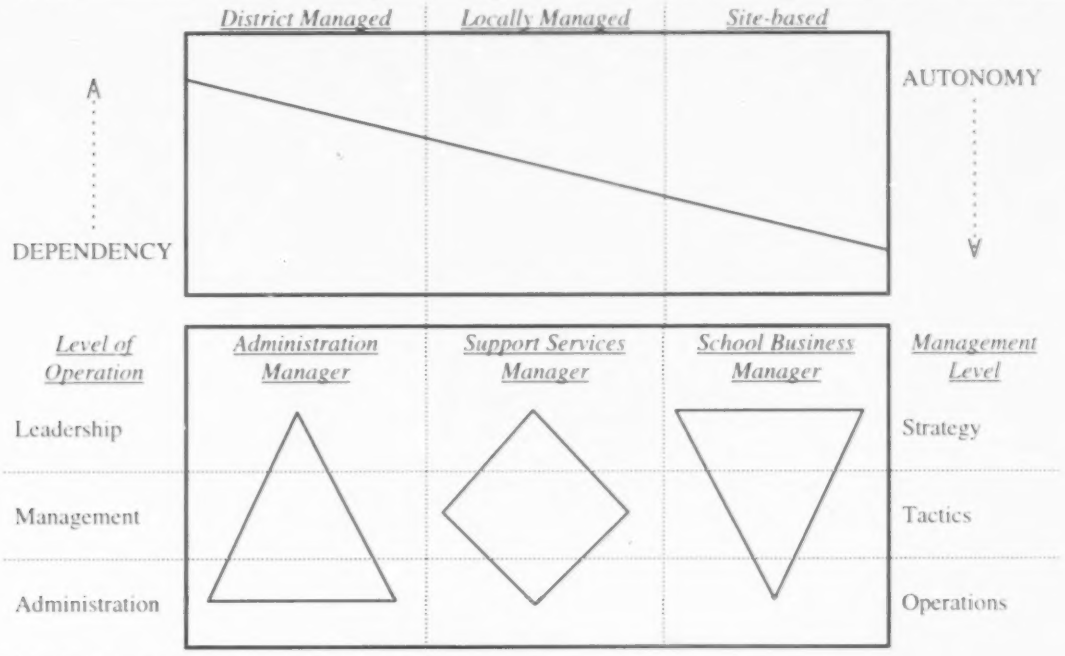

Fig. 2: Levels of Autonomy in School Management

The lower part of Fig. 2. Illustrates the three "ideal types" of site-level resource manager identified against the level of autonomy enjoyed or desired by the school. A school that is largely dependent on its district (or LEA) and therefore reactive rather than proactive to policy imperatives will need an Administration Manager who is strong on routine data processing, has some ability and expertise in managing the site-level team and who is happy with a limited leadership role. Where the school has a larger degree of autonomy the Support Service Manager needs to have a greater expertise in team management but still retain some facility for routine clerking (to remain in touch with staff carrying out such functions on site) as well as an increased capacity for leadership. For the school of the future, with a high degree of autonomy, the School Business Manager needs to have the highest level of expertise in strategic leadership as the level of devolved funding enables the buying in (or outsourcing) of support staff who will carry out the routine operations and will also have some ability to manage their own teams.

This model enables schools to determine their actual or desired level of autonomy and thence to identify the optimum characteristics of their site-level resource manager. Of course, we have already stated that no school can be completely autonomous or dependent and so will need to consider the linkage between the levels of leadership, management and routine operations at the site level and those of the district/LEA as the funding authority. However, this is another paper!

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Developed by Fergus O'Sullivan, Angela Thody and Elizabeth Wood in discussion with Professor Brent Davies and Professor John West-Burnham, the U.K. government's Teacher Training Agency and the National Bursars Association

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